

## Who Let The Wolves Out? – Part 2

*Baggageless in the palace...*

*As it turned out, my apprehensions were not as unfounded after all. Thirty minutes after we landed at Jodhpur airport, our through-checked bags failed to appear on the conveyor belt. 'There is only one Delhi-Jodhpur flight everyday', the over-apologetic Air India official informed us; 'You will need to manage without your bags for 24 hours'.*

A queue of trumpet blowers greeted us when we arrived at the palace. I suspect the royal welcome must be a major kick for most of the arriving guests. But we felt it more like a noisy, awkward intrusion on our privacy. A glass of chilled sparkling wine was thrust in our hands as we reluctantly followed the escort on a pre-check-in tour of the palace. Apparently, thousands of people worked for fourteen years (1929-1943) to put up the majestic structure. 'So massive that it is infeasible to air-condition the central courtyards', our tour guide proudly proclaimed. Rajasthan July had extracted its toll. We were sweating profusely when our guide finally concluded 'The construction itself was an innovative act of large-scale job creation when the region was hit by a severe famine'. As we wobbled back towards the check-in counter, an unpleasant image flashed through my mind—the countless construction workers earning their survival by toiling in the scorching heat of the desert sun.

When we finally made it to our room, there were flowers and a bottle of [Bordeaux](#) waiting for us. I was not surprised, it was a part of my plan. However, as I stole a sneak peak at the bill, I was surprised. I had requested the hotel for a good wine, but not *this* good! I popped the cork & we clicked cheers. A few sips later, the inspiration stayed elusive. Perhaps it was not the wine's price tag, maybe the right ambience itself was amiss? So I clamped my iPhone onto the room's docking station. The music didn't do much for us. We both have a limited choice of songs on our gadgets, as this is primarily the kids' department. The anniversary day so far had been a complete drainer. It made sense to crash out and wake up rejuvenated.

The evening was designed to get better. I had organized a special surprise—a private romantic dinner on the sprawling lawns against the splendid backdrop of the palace. But now we were staring at a bumner. We didn't have access to a fresh wardrobe, let alone the attire appropriate for a stately dinner. I called housekeeping, and we soon floated downstairs in the hotel's complimentary free-sized cotton pajama-kurtas and bathroom sandals.



Umaid Bhawan Palace, Jodhpur

(Photo courtesy: Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces)

'The weather is too hot for outdoor dining' our butler informed us. Instead we were rushed through the long corridors until we reached a closed door, and then made to wait outside, as the room was not even ready! It was a secular collapse—missing baggage, noisy welcome, blistering weather, sycophant guide, expensive wine, mundane music, humbling attire, and all capped by an unromantic climax! Oblivious to Ritu's elbowing, I gave it off to our butler: 'Your noble king couldn't figure out more benevolent ways of creating employment, such as construction of roads, schools, sewages, parks etc.?'

*'Be positive', it's one of the most abused phrases in motivational talks. For, when real life comes knocking, the entire punch of 'be positive' is reduced to an abstract jargon. How do you stay positive when you are in a state of utter resignation? Sure, Air India was a **past** mistake that my mind was just unable to let go. But with limited options, if I had to do it all over again—my choice wouldn't be any different. Sure, I felt powerless in the **present** chaos. Then again, who has the power of intervention when a circumstantial set of sequential things just keep going wrong? Sure, I was unprepared to face the fate of our anniversary behind that closed door, but where was my remote control to control that **future**?*

*My vision was blurred. I knew I was facing a simple set of obstacles, yet I had lost the will to wall myself. To objectively analyze the 'time zone' pattern for the downer, and leverage that revelation to snap out of the negativity. Perhaps Robin Williams was in a similar dilemmatic state, only amplified a zillion times?*

*Maybe Robin and I are not too different? While Robin evangelized the power of laughter to tackle life's adversities, I am a strong advocator on the supremacy of an analytical mind to take life head-on. But the truth is, we both are no better than a theoretic preacher on the podium. For when it comes to walking the talk, we are as clueless as the guy sitting at the back of the*

audience, playing with his mobile phone. Who let our own wolves out: ***the past, the present, or the future?***

PS. The [Sindhi dinner](#) coupons are still up for grabs